What is claimed is:

1. A method of processing data comprising the steps of:

   processing data in accordance with a first set of rules, which operate, *inter alia* to define a stage at which such a processing operation ceases;

   applying to the partly-processed data a second set of rules, which operate to modify the data, so that the modified data may be processed in accordance with a third set of rules.

2. A method according to claim 1 wherein the first and third sets of rules are the same.

3. A method according to claim 1 wherein the modification in accordance with the second set of rules modifies the data in a significant manner.

4. A method according to claim 3 wherein the first and third set of rules do not modify the data in a significant manner.

5. A method according to claim 1 wherein the data is graphically represented data.

6. A method according to claim 5 wherein the data is an RDF graph.

7. A method according to claim 1 wherein the first set of rules perform a deterministic modification of the data.

8. A method according to claim 3 wherein the significant modifications include the deletion of significant data.

9. A method according to claim 3 wherein the significant modifications include the addition of significant data.

10. Method according to claim 9 wherein the significant additions are distinguishable from data which is, prior to performance of any modifications, significant.

11. A method according to claim 1 wherein the data describes an ontology.

12. A method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of processing the data in accordance with the third set of rules.

13. A method according to claim 12, further comprising the step, subsequent to the processing of the data in accordance with the third set of rules, of writing or verifying a digital signature establishing authenticity of the data.

14. A method according to claim 1 wherein reapplying the method of claim 1 to data processed in accordance with such a method does not result in any further modification of the data.

15. A method of canonicalizing an RDF graph having a plurality of blank nodes, the method comprising:

generating a representation of the RDF graph and ordering the representation, the plurality of blank nodes being substantially omitted from the ordering process;

assigning a label to each of a number of the plurality of blank nodes;

modifying the portion of the blank nodes remaining unlabelled; and

reordering the representation.

16. A method according to claim 15, wherein the modification of the unlabelled blank nodes comprises deleting said blank nodes.

17. A method according to claim 15, wherein the modification of the unlabelled blank nodes comprises adding data to said representation such that the remaining unlabelled blank nodes can be labelled and labelling said blank nodes accordingly.

18. A method according to claim 15 wherein the representation is an N-Triple document and the ordering is in a lexicographic ordering.

19. A computer program comprising program instructions that, when loaded onto a computer, cause the computer to process data by:

processing data in accordance with a first set of rules, which operate, *inter alia* to define a stage at which such a processing operation ceases;

applying to the partly-processed data a second set of rules, which operate to modify the data, so that the modified data may be processed in accordance with a third set of rules.

20. A computer program according to claim 19 embodied on a computer readable medium.

21. A computer program according to claim 19 carried on an electrical carrier signal.

22. A computer program comprising program instructions that, when loaded onto a computer, cause the computer to canonicalize an RDF graph having a plurality of blank nodes by:

generating a representation corresponding to the RDF graph and ordering the representation, the plurality of blank nodes being substantially omitted from the ordering process;

assigning a label to each of a number of the plurality of blank nodes;

modifying the portion of the blank nodes remaining unlabelled; and

reordering the representation.

23. A computer program according to claim 22 embodied on a computer readable medium.

24. A computer program according to claim 22 carried on an electrical carrier signal.

25. A method of signing an RDF graph comprising the steps of: canonicalizing the graph by ordering triples from the graph and omitting blank nodes from the process of so ordering; and generating a signature in the form of a triple.

26. A method according to claim 25 further comprising the step of including the signature triple with other triples of the graph.